

## **Four-Minute Reflections on the Mass**

### **Reflection 1: Introduction**

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Have you ever wondered why we celebrate Mass the way we do? Why do we have a procession at the start of Mass? Why do we make the sign of the cross? Why do we sometimes kneel, while at other times we stand? Why are we encouraged to join in the singing? Questions such as these are often on the minds of every Catholic who comes to Mass. We look for answers to questions such as these to help us not only to become better-informed Catholics but, more importantly, to help us enter more fully into our Eucharistic celebration. As the Second Vatican Council emphasized, “Full, conscious, active participation by all the people” is the “aim to be considered before all else.”

At the request of Bishop Wester each parish in the diocese has been asked to present a series of short talks on the structure of the Mass. These Four-Minute Reflections, following the Prayer after Communion, will hopefully help us, as the assembly, come to a better understanding of the Mass, and enable us to participate more fully, consciously and actively. They will not be sermons, but carefully prepared talks that over time will cover the key aspects of the Mass. Imagine a “class about the Mass” without ever leaving the comfort of your pew!

The purpose of these reflections will not be to overwhelm us with a lot of detail, but rather to increase our awareness of how various parts of the Mass work together to heighten a sense of unity as we are drawn into the sacred mystery and then sent forth to carry on Christ’s mission in the world. We will see how the introductory rites - the procession, the singing and prayers - prepare us to listen attentively to the word of God so that we may enter more joyfully and gratefully into the Liturgy of the Eucharist

and Communion. Then, renewed by word and sacrament, we will better appreciate the significance of the prayers, blessings and dismissal that come at the conclusion of Mass.

You can do a lot of things in four minutes: drive four miles, write an email, heat up your dinner, or listen to a song. We believe that these Four-Minute Reflections will provide a better understanding of the symbols, gestures, and rites that are sometimes not understood or taken for granted at Mass thus enabling us to share more deeply in the mystery of this great sacrament. Over the course of the liturgical year, we will strive to shed some light on practices that are ever ancient and yet, ever new. We invite you to listen attentively to what is being presented. And remember: each reflection will only take four minutes.